The network capacity is being augmented by about 1 lakh lines for which equipment has been received and is planned to be commissioned by May, 2005.

BSNL has also taken action to further augment the mobile network capacity in Bihar by 4.55 lakh lines during 2005 to meet the over-whelming demand.

Demand-Supply Scenario of BSNL Mobile Phones in Orissa

3737. DR. RADHAKANT NAYAK: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that all the Districts of Orissa have not been fully covered by BSNL cellular service;

(b) if so, the districts which have been left out;

(c) whether there is a big gap in the demand-supply scenario for BSNL mobile phone service in Orissa; and

(d) the number of towers set up so far and the target for the current year in providing mobile phone service in Orissa?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has provided cellular mobile service in all the district headquarters of Orissa.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) Post-paid mobile connections are being provided on demand, but due to capacity constraints, release of pre-paid connections is temporarily controlled.

(d) BSNL has so far commissioned around 300 radio base stations for cellular mobile services in the state with a capacity of 2,44,900 lines and expansion of the network capacity by additional 5,00,000 lines during the current year is in progress.

Amendment in the Indian Patent Act

3738. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the amendments in the Indian Patent Act, 1970 through ordinance issued in December 2004 would seriously hit the Information Technology boom in India;

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's response thereto; and

(c) what steps are proposed to be taken in this regard so as to save the software sectors from being patented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) to (c) The amendments in the Indian Patent Act, 1970 relating to patenting of computer software brought through an ordinance promulgated in Deceber, 2004 by way of modification to the existing Section 3(k) was in the nature of a clarification and in any case was withdrawn during the consideration of the bill in Budget Session of Parliament. In effect, this implies that the position in this regard is the same as after the Patent (Amedment) Act, 2002.

Absorbtion of Extra Departmental Employees

3739 SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state.

(a) the number of extra departmental employees (EDS) attached to various post offices in the country;

(b) whether it is a fact that many of them have put in 5 to 10 years and even more years of service, and

(c) whether Government are considering to absorb them in the department against regular vacancies in group 'C' and 'D' posts instead of filling such vacancies through direct recruitment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) 2,98,571 Gramin Dak Sevaks earlier called Extra Departmental Agents are attached to various post offices in the country as on 31.3 2004.

(b) Yes, Sir.

Gramin Dak Sevaks are considered for appointment against regular vacancies in group 'C' and 'D' posts in terms of the provisions of the Recruitment Rules subject to their fulfilling the eligibility conditions etc.